

What is claimed is:

1. An industrial automation system computer display comprising:

a primary display region;

a peripheral display region;

5 a message indicator superimposed over a portion of the peripheral region; and

a user-activated icon for causing retrieval and display of an industrial automation system message.

2. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1,

10 wherein the peripheral region comprises a top edge, a bottom edge and lateral edges circumscribing an icon for invoking tools for running and debugging application programs.

3. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1, wherein the message indicator is located in a status bar.

15 4. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1, wherein the message indicator is displayed superimposed over the peripheral display region when triggered by an automation system message.

5. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1, wherein the user-activated icon is displayed approximately in the center of  
20 the peripheral region.

6. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1, wherein the user-activated icon is located adjacent the bottom edge of the peripheral region.

7. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1,  
wherein the user-activated icon, when selected for a first period of time,  
invokes retrieval of a single message, and, when selected for a second  
period of time, invokes retrieval of a plurality of messages.

5 8. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 7,  
wherein the plurality of messages is displayed in a pop-up window.

9. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 7,  
wherein the first period of time is less than the second period of time.

10 10. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 7,  
wherein the pop-up window overlays a work area in the primary region.

11. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 7,  
wherein the messages in the pop-up window are associated with respective  
time tags and in an order based on the time tags.

12. The industrial automation system computer display according to claim 1,  
15 wherein the message indicator is accompanied by an audio-visual warning  
comprising an audible sound and a blinking display comprising a color  
contrasting with the visual characteristics of the surrounding peripheral  
region.

13. A method for use with an industrial automation display having a  
20 peripheral display region and a primary display region, the method for  
displaying messages relating to industrial automation applications and  
providing user-activated inquiry into the messages, the method comprising

the steps of:

(a) providing a message indicator, in the peripheral region only, indicating the presence of a message;

(b) receiving a signal from the user via the user's activation of the message

5 indicator; and

(c) in response to receiving the signal from the user, retrieving the contents of a message associated with the message indicator and displaying the retrieved message contents in a pop-up window adjacent to the peripheral display region.

10 14. The method according to claim 12, wherein a single message is retrieved if the user's activation comprises a selection lasting a first period of time, and a plurality of messages is retrieved if the user's activation comprises a second period of time.

15 15. The method according to claim 13, wherein the first period of time is less than the second period of time.

16. The method according to claim 12, wherein the messages relate to a fault-causing event.

20 17. A method for permitting a user to interact with an industrial automation display, the display comprising a primary display region and a peripheral display region, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving an industrial automation display comprising a message indicator superimposed on the peripheral display region;

(b) activating retrieval of message contents by selecting the message

indicator; and

(c) receiving the retrieved message contents.

18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the message indicator is accompanied by an acoustic signal.

5 19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the message relates to a fault-causing event.

20. The method according to claim 18, wherein the user responding to the signal comprises viewing and assessing the nature of the fault-causing message.

10 21. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of activating retrieval of the message comprises clicking on the message indicator.

22. The method according to claim 16, wherein the retrieved message content is received via a pop-up window.

15 23. The method according to claim 20, wherein the pop-up window shows a list of messages related to the fault-causing event presented in the order of their occurrence.

24. The method according to claim 16, further comprising the step of entering a response to a message in the pop-up window.